

WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE JOINT COMMITTEE

Daventry District Council Offices

Tuesday, 14 May 2019

PRESENT: Councillors Auger (Northamptonshire County Council), Brown (Daventry District Council), Chantler (Daventry District Council), Golby (Northamptonshire County Council), Hibbert (Northampton Borough Council), Larratt (Northampton Borough Council), Legg (Northamptonshire County Council), Lofts (South Northamptonshire Council), Grant (substitute for McCord) (South Northamptonshire Council), Millar (Daventry District Council), Nunn (Northampton Borough Council), Patel (Northamptonshire County Council), Rawlinson (South Northamptonshire Council), Ritchie (Daventry District Council) and Stone (Northampton Borough Council).

Councillor Jonathan Nunn advised that the announcement had been made by the Secretary of State to replace the eight councils of Northamptonshire with two unitary councils from April 2021. There would be elections to the Shadow Authority in May 2020. The existing county divisions would be used, with three members per division, resulting in 93 members for West Northamptonshire. There would also be a single Children's Trust for the whole of the county.

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 26th March 2019 were approved, subject to the following amendment to Section 8, para 2: replace '*He continued that the two new authorities' websites will go live on 1st April 2020, and that elections will be held on the first Thursday in May 2020.*' with '*He continued that work was ongoing towards the two new authorities' websites going live on 1st April 2020, and for elections to be held on the first Thursday in May 2020.*'

The minutes were approved and signed as a correct record.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none.

4. QUESTIONS FROM PUBLIC AND MEMBERS

There were none.

5. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

Keith Cheesman stated that when the report was published, the decision of the Secretary of State had been expected. This had now been delivered, so changes would need to be made in the light of this. The report status was mostly amber, reflecting the challenges around the delays. The most significant milestones were charted in Appendix 1, although this did not show the entire plan. There was some work in progress, and some behind schedule; however in view of the Secretary of State's announcement, this was not considered insurmountable.

The budget details shown in the report were a snapshot, and not yet fully refined. Councillor Chris Millar welcomed the announcement and asked whether the Programme

Milestone Plan would be extended for the new date and whether there would now be scope for transformation rather than simply ensuring the new authority was safe and legal on vesting day. Keith Cheesman advised that the plan would be updated and whilst there would not be time for full transformation, it was likely that some changes would be implemented.

Councillor Phil Larratt requested that documents were provided in colour when they include coloured content.

Councillor Richard Auger asked whether Keith Cheesman was working closely with the transformation at NCC. It was confirmed that this was the case, and further discussion would take place at the Chief Executives' Meeting on 15th May 2019.

RESOLVED:

That the West Northamptonshire Joint Committee noted the progress made and that the report would be updated in the light of the Secretary of State's decision.

6. REPORT OF THE GOVERNANCE TASK AND FINISH GROUP

Councillor Peter Rawlinson stated that the proposed Constitution was based on the 115 page Dorset Constitution, with some local preferences. Appendix A had been completed and Appendix B was in progress. The outstanding items would be discussed at the Task and Finish Group on 20th May 2019 and reported at the next WNJC meeting.

The Constitution was intended to work for the Shadow Authority, to form the basis for the unitary Council and to be as accessible to residents as possible.

It was proposed that Council would meet at 6.30 pm until 10.00 pm at the latest. There would be an Overview and Scrutiny Committee made up of 18 people and chaired by the largest opposition group. The committees would be politically balanced and the constitution gender neutral.

Councillor Peter Rawlinson expressed thanks to the Task and Finish Group and officers for their contributions.

Councillor Danielle Stone considered that 30 minutes was not long enough for public contributions. Councillor Peter Rawlinson pointed out that there would be 30 minutes for the public to speak in addition to 30 minutes for questions. It was important to get a balance between conducting business and retaining openness with residents. The timings could be changed by the Council if desired.

Councillor Adam Brown drew Members' attention to page 28, 1.2 and 1.3 and expressed concern that consultation with the Executive regarding Overview and Scrutiny might make it difficult to hold them to account. It was important to have a firm line between the functions of scrutiny and the Executive. Councillor Richard Auger stated that independent scrutiny had definitely been the intention, although he acknowledged the wording in 1.2 and 1.3 may have been a little clumsy.

Councillor Alan Chantler congratulated the Task and Finish Group on their work. He was pleased to note the gender neutrality, but pointed out that page 121, point 3, the phrase 'shall normally stand' could have been more sensitively worded.

Councillor Andrew Grant queried the figure of £10 for gifts and hospitality and considered it to be rather low. Councillor Richard Auger stated that there had been a long debate about this figure, which had subsequently been voted on by the Group.

Councillor Chris Millar expressed congratulations to the Task and Finish Group. The time allowed for the public to speak was important and it was the responsibility of the chair to sift out the pertinent points and decide whether there was duplication.

Councillor Stephen Hibbert asked for clarification regarding twin hatters. Seven signatures were required for a call in and three twin hatters could provide six votes. This would not be an issue once the Shadow had been elected, but could be a problem in the meantime.

Councillor Danielle Stone asked whether there would be provision for pre-scrutiny to allow participation by backbenchers. Councillor Peter Rawlinson stated that pre-scrutiny had been discussed and would be included. On being put to the meeting, the resolution was declared carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

- a) The WNJC noted the discussions undertaken and the subsequent conclusions drawn by the Governance Task and Finish Group outlined in the report; furthermore it noted that the conclusions drawn had informed the drafts at the appendices to the report.
- b) The WNJC noted that work undertaken, including the content of the Appendices to the report were based upon assumptions on the content of the expected Structural Changes Order of Northamptonshire and the documents may need to change to reflect the SCO when available.
- c) That with regard to b), the WNJC approved the parts of the draft constitution of the proposed West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority at Appendix A of the report.
- d) The WNJC noted the work in progress of the draft constitution of the proposed West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority at Appendix B of the report.
- e) The WNJC noted that the Task and Finish Group will be reconvened with a view to bringing a completed draft constitution to the WNJC's meeting in June 2019.
- f) The WNJC thanked all the Councillors who sat on the Task and Finish group for their considerable efforts, over the extremely tight and challenging timescales for the delivery of substantial amounts of complex documentation which will shape the workings of the Shadow Council should approval be granted in the Structural Changes Order (SCO).

7. REPORT OF THE INTERIM APPOINTMENTS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Senior Officers left the meeting for this item.

Councillor Alan Chantler acknowledged the excellent support of Gill Kennedy in preparing the report. The Task and Finish Group had met twice and had sought advice from HR concerning Job Descriptions and Person Specifications. No additional payment would be received for the secondment. Initially secondment would be restricted to existing officers, extending to other suitable officers in the Councils, then suitable officers in North Northamptonshire Councils if necessary. The process could be put on hold if the timetable changed. There would be a selection process if there was more than one candidate. The panel would be the same for each post, but not necessarily for all posts. Councillor Chris Lofts requested that opposition members be represented on the selection panel.

Councillor Auger considered that it was important for the Head of Paid Service to have a successful track record of delivering Children's and Adult Services within budget. Keith

Cheesman pointed out that the Interim Head of Paid Service would not be running any services and that this could limit the potential applicants. Councillor Chris Millar pointed out that this role required a people manager. On being put to the meeting, the resolution was declared carried with the majority voting in favour, Councillor Chris Lofts voted against and Councillor Ken Ritchie abstained.

RESOLVED:

2.1 The WNJC approved the proposed process (Appendix A) to designate officers as Interim Head of Paid Service (to include Returning Officer), Interim Monitoring Officer and Interim S.151 for the Shadow Authority.

2.2 The WNJC agreed to nominate Councillors to participate in the recruitment and selection process, in accordance with the recommended process at Appendix A, ie:

- a) A panel comprising one elected Member from each of the constituent West Northamptonshire Councils to be established to undertake the selection process, including an interview and presentation.
- b) The panel to be comprised of the same Members for the interviews for each statutory role, but the same panel does not need to consider all of the roles.

8. REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL TASK AND FINISH GROUP

(As Senior Officers would leave the meeting during discussion of agenda Item 7, it was moved to the end of the agenda.)

Councillor Suresh Patel outlined the report.

Councillor Ken Ritchie considered that the proposed panel was a potential PR disaster. He stated that Members served people who struggled and allowances should be decided by them.

Councillor Danielle Stone considered that best practice should be employed at all times. Time pressures were not too pressing and setting up a new panel would be better than risking reputational damage.

Councillor Richard Auger pointed out that the proposed panel comprised of people who were represented by Members. Members' allowances were a technical issue and the panel therefore needed a technical understanding. Councillor Chris Millar concurred and questioned whether there were examples of procedures followed elsewhere.

Councillor Matt Golby stated that the process for appointment of the panel was open and transparent.

Councillor Adam Brown noted that the remuneration panel was independent and there needed to be an arm's length relationship to ensure fairness. Reducing allowances could reduce the diversity of councillors.

Councillor Chris Lofts considered that public perception was key and that it was dangerous to be seen to be putting together a panel consisting of people with whom Members already had a relationship. There was time to conduct an open recruitment process.

It was agreed that this issue would be discussed further by the Task and Finish Group. On being put to the meeting, the resolution was declared carried with the majority voting in

favour and Councillor Chris Lofts, Councillor Ken Ritchie and Councillor Danielle Stone voting against.

RESOLVED:

The WNJC considered and approved the following recommendations of the IRP (Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) Task and Finish Group:

2.1 That the following individuals be appointed as members of the IRP for the proposed West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority:

- Person D (Northampton Borough Council IRP Member) – Chair of the IRP
- Person B (Daventry District Council Panel IRP Member)
- Person F (Northamptonshire County Council IRP Member)
- Person G (South Northamptonshire Council IRP Member)

2.2 That Officers be tasked with contacting the individuals above to make preliminary arrangements for meetings of the IRP.

2.3 That the Lead Monitoring Officer for the West Northamptonshire Authorities be given delegated authority, in consultation with the Chair of the Task and Finish Group, to determine the remuneration of the IRP members, taking account of the remuneration received by IRP members in each of the four West Northamptonshire authorities.

2.4 That the report of the IRP regarding its recommendations in relation to a Scheme of Members' Allowances for the West Northamptonshire Shadow Authority is presented to the Shadow Authority at its inaugural meeting for consideration.

9. MATTERS OF URGENCY WHICH BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCE THE CHAIR IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

There were none.

The meeting concluded at 7:26pm